

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7892

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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S E C R E T AMMAN 2569

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO, SY, SA, EG

SUBJECT: TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER -- SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN AND
SAUDI RELATIONS

SUMMARY: RIFAI TELLS ME THAT ASAD EXPECTS TO DEMAND THAT HE GET
SOMETHING FROM EGYPT AS A RESULT OF MEETING OF PRIME MINSTERS TO
BE HELD MAY 19 IN RIYADH. ASAD WILL ASK FOR SOME CHANGE
IN GENERAL FRAMEWORK SURROUNDING SINAI AGREEMENT. RIFAI
IS SKEPTICAL ABOUT ANY SUCCESS. RIFAI SAID ASAD BELIEVES
U.S. IS BEHIND SAUDI EFFORT AND THAT EGYPT MIGHT BE MOVING
TOWARD ANOTHER STEP IN THE SINAI. END SUMMARY

1. I SAW RIFAI MAY 12. WE HAD VERY SHORT DISCUSSION
OF HAWK WHERE I MADE POINTS AGAIN FOLLOWING CURRENT
INSTRUCTINS. I THANKED RIFAI FOR KING'S LETTER.

2. BULK OF OUR DISCUSSION CENTERED ON WHAT RIFAI TOLD
ME OF SYRIAN REACTIONS TO CURRENT KUWAIT-SAUDI EFFORT TO
BRING SYRIAN AND EGYPT TOGETHER. RIFAI SAID JORDAN HAD
BEEN INFORMED SOME TIME AGO BY SYRIANS OF SAUDI APPROACH.
ASAD WAS ONLY ONE IN FAVOR IN SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ON TAKING
THIS STEP. ASAD SAID HE DID NOT WANT TO STAND IN THE WAY
OF PROGRESS AND THAT SOMETHING POSITIVE MIGHT RESULT.

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3. BY SOMETHING POSITIVE, ASAD DESIRES A CHANGE IN

EGYPTIAN POSITION RELATIVE TO SINAI II ACCORD. HE WILL NOT AGREE TO "KISS AND MAKE UP" WITHOUT SUCH CHANGES. RIFAI SAYS THESE COULD INCLUDE CLOSING THE CANAL TO ISRAELI CARGOES, A STATEMENT BY THE EGYPTIANS THAT THEY DO NOT ACCEPT A STATUS OF NON-BELLIGERENCY, OR A STATEMENT BY EGYPTIANS THAT SINAI ACCORD IS LIMITED BY THE FACT THAT IT PREDICATED ON FURTHER MOVES TOWARD PEACE IN THE AREA.

4. RIFAI SAYS AYYUBE WILL BE TOUCH AND EGYPTIAN PREMIER SALIM UNLIKELY TO HAVE MUCH LATITUDE. SYRIA HAS INSISTED TO SAUDIS AND KUWAITIES THAT MOVE CANNOT BE USED TO SPLIT OFF JORDAN AND SYRIA AND THAT AYYUBE WILL SPEAK FOR SYRIAN-JORDANIAN SIDE. RIFAI NOTED THAT SYRIAN COMMUNIQUE WELCOMING THE MEETING PUT SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON FACT THAT SINAI ACCORD WAS A BASIC AREA OF DISAGREEMENT.

5. RIFAI SAYS SYRIANS AND EGYPTIANS HAVE AGREED TO CUT OUT PROPAGANDA AGAINST EACH OTHER AND THAT EGYPTIAN ATTACKS AGAINST JORDAN ARE INCLUDED.

6. RIFAI SAID THAT HE WANTED TO TELL US CONFIDENTIALLY THAT ASAD VERY MUCH SUSPECTS THAT U.S. IS BEHIND SAUDI-KUWAITI EFFORT POSSIBLY, ASAD THINKS, TO KEEP ARABS BUSY FOR AWHILE, AND THAT RAPPROCHEMENT MAY BE SEEN BY U.S. AS SETTING THE STAGE FOR ANOTHER STEP IN THE SINAI. RIFAI INDICATES HE BELIEVES LATTER POINT FARFETCHED BUT MADE NO COMMENT ON THE FORMER. PICKERING

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